

Role of Alternative Medicine in Public Health, its Perspective in Child Health Care in Rural Areas

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Abstract—Public Health is the most important aspect of Medicine. It can help prevent and bring solutions to the health issues like no other field. In the recent past there has been a growing awareness in Alternative Medicine and their importance to public health both in developed and developing countries. Increasing popularity, easy availability, diversity and recognition in developing countries along with comparative low cost, low levels of technological input, low side effects and growing economic importance are some of the positive features of alternative medicine. In this perspective, there is a dire need to mainstream alternative medicine into public health care to achieve the objective of improved access to healthcare facilities.

There are around six lakh qualified AYUSH practitioners located in rural and urban areas. They are skilled in all aspects of preventive and curative care. Growing awareness of AYUSH's potential in answering community health complications resulting from nutritional deficiencies, epidemics and vector-borne diseases have opened opportunity for AYUSH in Public health. Within the public system, integration has been in the form of co-location of services of AYUSH in primary health centre, community health centre and hospitals. This results in AYUSH services being brought under one roof with allopathic medicine, thereby giving patients a choice. It also provides rural health centres with a 'qualified doctor', when allopathic physicians do not want to work in rural areas. It has been the chief source of interest among health administrators by the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) as 'mainstreaming AYUSH'.

In India, an estimated 26 millions of children are born every year. As per Census 2011, the segment of children (0-6 years) accounts 13% of the total population in the Country and there are 22% adolescents in the age group 10-19 years. An estimated 1.2 million children die every year before completing 5 years of age. Under NRHM, significant progress has been made in reducing mortality in children over the last 10 years. Whereas there is an advance in reducing child mortality there is a dire need to improving survival result. Out of every 100 babies born in this country annually, 5 to 6 have a birth defect, i.e. around 1.5 million birth defects annually in the country and accounts for 9.6% of all the newborn deaths. Developmental delays are common in early childhood affecting at least 10% of the children. These delays if not intervened timely may lead to permanent disabilities including cognitive, hearing or vision impairment. Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK) is an important initiative aiming at early identification and early intervention for children from birth to 18 years to cover 4 'D's i.e. Defects at birth, Deficiencies, Diseases and Development delays including disability. Significant achievements have been made in last ten years in our efforts to improve health determinants as life expectancy, maternal mortality, infant mortality and child mortality.